

There's no gold in those silver certificates

By Roger Boye

Here are the answers to more questions about coins and paper money. **Q**—You once said that silver certificate dollar bills dated 1957 had little special value to collectors. Is that true today? Also, what about bills of “series 1935-F” and “series 1935-G”?

L.P., Highland Park

A—Not much has changed. Most \$1 silver certificates of the various 1935 and 1957 series command just a modest premium on the hobby market, even if they are in “crisp, uncirculated condition.”

Uncle Sam hasn't printed such bills since the 1960s, but many of them still are common among collectors. Silver certificates—which carry blue serial numbers and Treasury seals—remain legal tender.

Q—My late father left us with what we think might be a valuable coin collection. It includes pieces marked “1871-CC silver dollar, brilliant uncirculated” and “1885 \$5 gold, proof.” Are they rare? If so, how might we get top dollar? We don't want to keep them.

B.M., Chicago

A—The coins you list probably are worth at least \$10,000 each. To get a good price, you might consign them for sale in a major coin auction, where the gavel amount should approach full retail.

The auction house will charge you a commission of 10 to 15 percent, but that's still better than selling them to a coin dealer at the going wholesale rate. Most of the major coin auction companies advertise in *Coin World*, *Numismatic News* and other hobby publications.

One drawback of an auction is that you may have to wait several months for your money. But the higher price should more than compensate you for the delay.

Q—Where should I turn in a counterfeit \$20 bill I got in change? The ink on the back side is extremely faded.

E.R., Downers Grove

A—The U.S. Secret Service (312-353-5431 for the Chicago office) is charged with enforcing laws that relate to U.S. paper money. But before you call Uncle Sam, you might show the item to a coin dealer or other expert. It's likely you own an authentic “printing error” that could be worth \$40 or more.

If your bill is genuine, it should have a lifelike portrait on the front side, distinct and evenly spaced serial numbers, and tiny red and blue fibers embedded in the paper.